



City, state and company officials man shovels to break ground for a 7,500-square-foot manufacturing and repair facility for Gorton Hydraulics, Inc. in Jonesboro. Economic developers believe the company's graduation from the East Arkansas Business Incubator System marks a major step toward beginning a new phase of industrial development in Jonesboro.

E. Arkansas Incubator Graduate Breaks Ground in Several Ways

By MELANIE J. HALL

Just before Gorton Hydraulics, Inc. broke ground for its 7,500-square-foot facility in Jonesboro, it became the first graduate of the East Arkansas Business Incubator System (EABIS).

The company currently has six employees, and Gorton expects to hire another three to four people when the new facility, targeted for mid-March, is completed. In one to two years, as many as 20 jobs could be available, he continued.

The company, which specializes in the manufacturing and repair of hydraulics systems, has been sharing offices with EABIS for the past 18 months to prepare for beginning operations. Guy Enchelmayer, director of the incubator, said Gorton is an example of what EABIS intends to accomplish with new, start-up businesses.

Todd Gorton, president of the new business, said his company has been given more stability through it stay at EABIS.

The incubator provides "would-be entrepreneurs" with initial co-location and shared services, as well as professional advice from the system's board of directors and volunteers from the business community.

Enchelmayer said company individuality is stressed in an effort not to create dependency during a stay at the incubator.

A business applicant is judged upon its outline plan, business owner's background and experience, business potential and

resources. If the incubator can play a role in helping the business meet its goals in the time frame set by the initial plan, then the company may be admitted to the program.

Enchelmayer said that ideally, two years with the incubator could equal five years of experience on the "outside." He added that he is optimistic about Gorton's future because its market is virtually unlimited. For Gorton, admission to the incubator was the break he'd been looking for to go into business for himself.

When possible administrative problems would crop up, Gorton said the knowledge offered by experts at the incubator was an asset.

"Sometimes it's difficult for a young man to compete in corporate America, but with the help of everyone, we're doing that," he said.

John Troutt Jr., chairman of both the Arkansas Science and Technology Authority and Jonesboro Unlimited, said Gorton's business would be a welcome addition to the Jonesboro Industrial Park and had been a significant accomplishment for EABIS.

"This is what the incubator system is all about," Troutt said, adding that in the future, ASTA will likely play a more vital role in state and local economic developments.

The incubator, begun in 1988, is funded through grants from Arkansas State University.

West Tenn. Goodyear Plant Recalls 230 Employees

Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. has announced plans to recall 230 of the 270 employees laid off last fall from its Union City, Tenn. plant. Company officials stated that workers will be back on the job by February 1.

Adjustments made in the work week calendar and production schedule last year enabled Goodyear to recall members of its local 3,100-person workforce.

"Considering the current economic situation, it's good for this plant, our employees and this community," stated Jimmy Cagle, manager of Goodyear's public relations department.

"Because we made adjustments in our production last year, we have the opportunity to bring 230 employees back to work to meet all our demand for tire production."

Faced with sluggish automobile sales

and mounting inventory, Goodyear made numerous cuts in production and employment last year, including the September layoffs and a two-day plant shut-down in late December.

The 22-year-old plant manufactures 10,000 radial tires for light trucks and 40,000 for passenger cars daily. Goodyear produces tires for the original equipment and replacement markets, insulating the company somewhat from depressed new car sales.

"Our plant services both the original equipment market and the replacement market," Cagle noted. The Union City facility supplies 25 General Motors plants, excluding the Saturn Corp. plant in Spring Hill, Tenn. Among the automobile manufacturers supplied by the plant are Nissan in Smyrna, Tenn. and Toyota in Georgetown, Ky.

Mississippi To Develop New Container Recycling Plan

By MELANIE J. HALL

The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce is working to launch a statewide pesticide container rinsing, collecting and recycling project in conjunction with other state agencies, including the Department of Environmental Quality. The movement is a cooperative effort to deal with the potentially dangerous problem of pesticide container disposal.

Mississippi State University recently helped sponsor a successful nine-county demonstration of a portable plastic granulator that can grind triple-rinsed pesticide containers into flakes and pellets. After attending the demonstration, Lee County Cooperative Extension Agent Jackie Courson said he became convinced that the

Northeast Mississippi area needs a regional approach to collecting, recycling and landfilling pesticide containers.

"We are going to have to deal with it on (some) kind of regional basis like they have had to do with the landfills," Courson said. "We are trying to get into a position this spring where we can start collecting containers."

Courson said farmers will face a unique dilemma of disposing their pesticide containers in those new landfills, much like the financial difficulties many cities and counties will face when new Environmental Protection Agency regulations governing the running of landfills come out this year.

Under the new regulations, pesticide containers not rinsed are expected to be (Continued on Page 7)

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Seminar To Focus On Japanese Partnerships

Building business partnerships with Japan will be the topic of a seminar sponsored by Memphis State University's Robert Wang Center for International Business on Thursday, March 21, 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., at Fogelman Executive Center.

Designed to address the basics of an international business relationship, the seminar will assist participants in developing the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to initiate and foster successful ventures.

Reiji Tsuda, a senior Japanese trade advisor with the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), will highlight his organization's role in promoting exports to Japan. Tsuda, who heads the newly created partnership between JETRO and the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development Export Office in Nashville, works with state officials in promoting mutually beneficial trade and economic relationships between the Volunteer State and Japan.

Additionally, Michael Plumley, CEO of Plumley Corp. and the Japanese joint venture Plumley Marugo Ltd., will discuss his personal experience in doing business with the Japanese.

Yasuhiro Hamada, the new Consul General of Japan at New Orleans, will be the luncheon speaker.

Developing business relationships with the Japanese will be the focus of a panel discussion featuring a variety of area business and state government officials. Members of the panel are: Leigh Lewis, export consultant, Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development; Mohan Karve, vice president-Japan/Korea, Buckman Laboratories; Kanzi Takayama, vice president, Goh America Corp.; Maury Bush, director of public relations, Sharp Manufacturing Co. of America; and Esther Millon Secman, director, Japan Center of Tennessee. The discussion will be moderated by Ree Russell, international trade specialist with the U.S. Department of Commerce Memphis office.

The seminar is co-sponsored by the U.S. Department of Commerce Memphis office, Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development, International Trade Center of the Tennessee Small Business Development Center, Mid-South Exporters' Roundtable, Memphis Area Chamber of Commerce and Tokyo Keizai University.

Cost for the seminar, including lunch and materials, is \$50 in advance or \$75 at the door. For more information, contact Dr. Kanji Haitani at the Robert Wang Center, 901-678-2805.

Main Street Program Spotlight Shines on Tupelo Development

By MELANIE J. HALL

Tupelo recently kicked off its Main Street plan with a tour and assessment meeting of the city's downtown area. The tour was conducted to evaluate the assets and disadvantages of the area. The five-member team then met with the Uptown Business Association to discuss its findings.

Team member Scott Barksdale, executive director of Mississippi's Downtown Development Association, said that the realization of independent businesses that they must work interdependently to maintain success is of utmost importance to the area.

Jack Reed, Jr., with the Uptown Business Association, said the program was started to help preserve America's small towns, but realized that would not be beneficial if they became ghost towns. Now the program also works to help areas become economically viable.

"Downtown is the image people have of the city," Barksdale said. "People do not think of Tupelo as the

mall. They think of downtown. This program is not for the betterment of an individual section. It is to improve the entire quality of life in your community."

The Main Street methodology takes a comprehensive approach to the prob-

Tupelo recently became one of 17 Main Street cities in Mississippi and one of more than 600 in the United States.

lem of economic and physical decline in America's downtowns. Through full-time management, cities revitalize their central business districts using a four-point approach which focuses on organization, design, promotion and economic restructuring.

Tupelo recently became one of 17 Main Street cities in Mississippi. There are more than 600 designated cities throughout the United States.



ZZ Top band members Dusty Hill (left), Billy Gibbons and Frank Beard hold aloft the "Muddywood" guitar in front of the Carnegie Public Library in Clarksdale, Miss., home of the Delta Blues Museum. ZZ Top has contributed time, money and effort to promote the museum and the recognition of the blues as an important cultural resource for the Mid-South Common Market region.

Clarksdale Blues Museum Sparks National Interest

By CLARK BRUNER

Clarksdale, Mississippi's Delta Blues Museum, recognized as one of the Mid-South's most valuable cultural assets, continues to gain national publicity and increased visitation.

The museum, located in the city's Carnegie Public Library, was established in 1979 for the purpose of collecting, preserving and making accessible to the public information, programs and related services concerning the history and significance of the blues, especially the Delta variety.

Visitors to the museum can take in videotape and slide programs, photographs, recordings, books, performances, memorabilia, archives and other sources of information free of charge. When it opened, about 40 people per month visited the facility. Currently, some 800 persons tour the museum each month.

Through what some may call an unlikely alliance, the museum has greatly benefited from the efforts of the members of rock and roll band ZZ Top. Billy Gibbons, lead guitarist for the band, visited the museum while on a break from recording in Memphis. Gibbons was greatly impressed by the project and museum director Sid Graves.

During that visit, Gibbons saw the birthplace of blues legend Muddy Waters, located just outside Clarksdale. He was given a souvenir of wood from the site, and commissioned a guitar, called "Muddywood" to be made from the wood. Since that day, Gibbons and ZZ Top have taken the museum on as a special project. They have donated funds, the Muddywood guitar and a great deal of time to building an awareness of the museum and the important role that Delta Blues have played in American music.

National press coverage of the museum has spawned attention and financial assistance from a number of other organizations across the country. Phillip Morris, through its Benson & Hedges Blues Festi-

val organization, donated the proceeds of a John Lee Hooker tribute this fall to the museum. The company has also donated \$15,000 for a travelling museum exhibit that will tour several major cities this spring. Hooker, who qualifies as a blues legend himself, is also a native of Clarksdale.

The museum recently received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities that will provide \$250,000 over the next three years. Matching funds will be raised over that period.

A new means of getting funds is the new Delta Blues Museum Visa Card. For every Visa card account opened and for every transaction made with the card, the Delta Blues Museum will receive a donation.

"The card is being marketed nationally, and will serve as a good promotional tool to make more people aware of our efforts," said Sid Graves, museum director. "I'm also pleased to announce that we have received generous donations of \$5,000 each from nationally-known entertainers Bonnie Raitt and John Fogerty."

Not only in Clarksdale, but all over the Common Market region, the blues are making a comeback, evidenced by increasing attendance at several blues festivals in the region. Each August Clarksdale holds its Sunflower Riverbank Blues Festival.

The well-known King Biscuit Blues Festival in Helena, Ark. brought in some 50,000 attendees last October 12 and 13. Not a bad showing for the event's fifth year.

The granddaddy of blues events, the annual Delta Blues Festival in Greenville, Miss., has been going some 14 years and brings \$1 million to the local economy every September. That's economic development by anyone's yardstick. Last year the Delta festival drew more than 30,000 blues fans.

For more information, contact the Delta Blues Museum, Carnegie Public Library, 114 Delta Ave., Clarksdale, Miss., 38614. Telephone: (601) 624-4461.

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